

# U.S. House of Representatives

## Committee on the Judiciary

Washington, DC 20515-6216  
One Hundred Eleventh Congress

February 25, 2009

The Honorable John Conyers  
Chairman  
House Judiciary Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2138 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Conyers,

I am writing to request a joint hearing of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security and the Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship, Refugees, Border Security, and International Law on the issue of escalating border violence along the U.S./Mexico border.

As seen in recent media reports, drug-related violence along our Southwest border with Mexico has reached an all time high. This violence is bred within drug-trafficking organizations—often spurring turf wars between various drug cartels looking to control the growing U.S. and Mexican drug trade markets. And now with the Mexican government taking a hard stand on its country's fight against drugs, we see the tension and violence between the traffickers and the Mexican military and police forces growing as well.

Just last week, CNN reported that since 2007, at least 9,000 people have been killed as a result of such violence. Over 1,000 of those killed were law enforcement and military officials. And in just one night 15 people were killed as a result of several disputes between Mexican military personnel and protestors along the border in Juarez and Reynosa, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas.

Threats facing the U.S. are real. According to a U.S. State Department report, 131 U.S. citizens were victims of homicides in Mexico between July 1, 2005, and June 30, 2008. The State Department has now issued travel alerts for Americans traveling to Mexico, which only hurts business and tourism between our two countries. *The Wall Street Journal* reported just this past weekend that Mexican gangs are operating organized crime rings in at least 230 U.S. cities. And with U.S. drug markets expanding, violence will only continue to cross over our borders and into the U.S.—affecting countless families living and working in border towns.

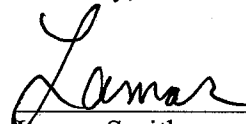
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The U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) confirms that drug-related violence, specifically along the Texas-Mexico border, has "surged" in recent years. Likewise, the U.S. Department of Justice has classified these Mexican cartels as the largest organized crime threat to the United States.

In just the past few days both *The Wall Street Journal* and *USA Today* have reported on the violent threats these drug cartels pose to the U.S. and Mexico. Copies of both these articles are enclosed for your review.

Congress must address these drug-related crimes and put an end to the violence that threatens to spill-over into the United States. It is imperative that we give proper attention to these issues before more people lose their lives and the violence escalates beyond our control. I look forward to working with you on this important hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Lamar", written over a horizontal line.

Lamar Smith  
Ranking Member  
House Judiciary Committee

Cc: Honorable Bobby Scott  
Honorable Zoe Lofgren  
Honorable Louie Gohmert  
Honorable Steve King

Enclosures (2)